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ABSTRACT

The Foster Grandparent Program was started in Nashville, Tennessee, as a demonstration program under the Office of Economic Opportunity; it was designed to help senior citizens support themselves by acting as grandparents to children who do not have their own. At Clover Bottom Hospital and School for the Retarded Child, 13 foster grandmothers work with severely handicapped children ranging from three to 16 years. At Warner School, a nongraded elementary school, 11 grandmothers provide love, understanding, and occasional help with a lesson for children from seven to nine years of age, most of whom come from single-parent, low-income homes. At the Metropolitan Children's Home, the grandmothers provide comfort and entertainment to children who are temporary wards of the court. They entertain children in the Pediatrics Ward of Hubbard Hospital. The program staff is housed in the Knowles Center for Senior Citizens. The director visits the host institutions twice a month and plans and conducts a day of inservice training every two months at the Center. (EB)

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

Foster Grandparent Program

Nashville, Tennessee

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION

AC 008 742

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Model Programs

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Childhood Education

Foster Grandparent Program

Nashville, Tennessee

A program where lonely children can be "spoiled" by foster grandparents, who themselves benefit by the relationship

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This booklet is one of 34 in a series of promising programs on childhood education prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. The series was written under contract by the American Institutes for Research for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Office of Child Development and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Within the broad area of childhood education the series includes descriptions of programs on reading and language development, the disadvantaged, preschool education, and special education. In describing a program, each booklet provides details about the purpose; the children reached; specific materials, facilities, and staff involved; and other special features such as community services, parental involvement, and finances. Sources of further information on the programs are also provided.

In Nashville, like other cities across the Nation, many senior citizens don't have grandchildren and, conversely, many children don't have grandparents. Some of these children, however, badly need someone to give them the extra love and attention that a grandparent knows how to give. The Foster Grandparent Program was organized to help senior citizens support themselves by acting as grandparents to some of these children.

The Foster Grandparent Program was started in Nashville 5 years ago as a demonstration program under the Office of Economic Opportunity for 1 year. It was designed to provide jobs to elderly people whose Social Security payments and other means of support were inadequate. It has continued because of its success and is presently being funded by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare on a year-to-year basis.

To qualify as a foster grandparent, an individual must be at least 60 years old and have an annual income that does not exceed $1,800 for a single person or $2,400 for a couple. Persons with the lowest incomes are generally selected first for the program. Recruiting has never been a problem in Nashville--30 of the 38

grandmothers have been in the program since it started, and a waiting list is maintained. Although both grandmothers and grandfathers are eligible for the program, to date only grandmothers work in the Nashville program.

Each month the 38 foster grandmothers work with 130 to 190 lonely children in five host institutions. Thirteen of these grandmothers devote their entire workday of 4 hours to single children; the other grandmothers share their time with from two to four children on an individual basis. The primary duty of the grandparent is to become a real friend to each child--a friend who will play games with him and listen to the many things he needs to talk about. She soothes him during emotional crises and always gives generous amounts of tender loving care.

THE HOST INSTITUTIONS

When the program was started, some host institutions were reluctant to accept the services of the foster grandmothers, fearing that these older people would add to the responsibilities of their staffs. However, the institutions that tried the program soon became enthusiastic.

At all host institutions, parents must give their permission before a child is assigned to a foster grandparent. Although the specific needs of the children vary at each institution, the basic needs are the same. Examples of the types of work performed by the foster grandparents are:

- At Clover Bottom Hospital and School for the Retarded Child, some children who were bedridden are now in wheelchairs because of the work of the grandparents. Many of these children have been taught to feed themselves.
- Although children at Hubbard Hospital remain away from home for only a short time, they find their stay more pleasant when a grandparent reads to them or plays games with them.
- At the Metropolitan Children's Home, the grandparents provide comfort and entertainment to children who are temporary wards of the court.
- At Warner School, children from broken homes attend a special class to be with a warm and understanding grandmother.

CLOVER BOTTOM HOSPITAL AND SCHOOL FOR THE RETARDED CHILD

Possibly the strongest relationship between child and foster grandparent can be seen at Clover Bottom, where 13 foster grandmothers work with severely retarded and physically handicapped children ranging in age from 3 to 16 years. The hospital staff refers the children they feel are most in need of special attention. While some of these children are bedridden, most are confined to wheelchairs.

The grandmother's working day at Clover Bottom begins at 8:30 a.m. when she takes her child to a large room in the hospital, where she pampers, pets, and plays with him. Weather permitting, she may take him for walks around the hospital grounds. These walks are followed by reading or playing until lunch arrives, when she either feeds him or teaches him to feed himself. The grandmother continues to pamper the child until he is returned to the ward at noon. After being served a hot lunch at the hospital, she either returns to her home or visits the nearest toy store to buy her child a present with the money allotted her for that purpose.

In talking with the grandmothers, one soon learns that each is fond of her "grandchildren" and enjoys seeing and helping them.

"You see so much you can do for these children. They're helpless, and they need help. There are so many things you can do for them--not only for your own child, but for the others too!"

"I don't know what I'd do if I didn't come out here. Since I've become so attached to Jerry, I think about it so much that when I'm not here (on vacation or sick) I send little things I think he'd like, and I ask different ones to look in on him. These children need us so badly--I feel very thankful I can have a job like this."

"She doesn't like toys too much. She likes getting out and, as I call it, going over a rocky road--the rougher, the better. And she can just go bumpety-bump, and that tickles her. Since she's blind she gets a lot of fun out of that. And then we go out on the playground and I put her on the swing and she enjoys that."

One grandmother asked her Sunday school class to help raise funds so that she could buy a wheelchair for her child. Another asked permission from the hospital to buy her child the special orthopedic shoes he needed. For the children's birthdays, the grandmothers usually bring such treats as cookies, ice cream, candy, and a little gift; and a party is held to which all the children are invited.

The best judges of this program would be the children themselves. Some of them can't speak, however. But while their feelings cannot always be verbally expressed, they are revealed in other ways. Both a VISTA worker who coordinates the program in the hospital and the hospital staff agree that the children are more responsive on weekdays, when the grandmothers visit. After each weekend they eagerly await their special friends. Monday morning never comes soon enough.

WARNER SCHOOL

At Warner School, a nongraded elementary school, 11 grandmothers provide certain children with love, understanding, and occasional help with a spelling lesson. The teachers refer the children to the program, and most referrals are children between

7 and 9 years of age from low-income families. Over 50 percent of the students in this school are from single-parent homes, and many arrive at school upset, hungry, and in need of love and understanding.

Every grandmother arrives at the school at 11 a.m. and spends 1 hour with each of her four foster grandchildren. Although a classroom has been provided for the use of the program, activities often take place on the playground. The activities of the grandmothers are coordinated with the classroom schedule so that the children do not miss important lessons. The children's activities during their grandmothers' visits include assembling puzzles, coloring, playing checkers, taking walks, and talking. Sometimes a teacher will ask a grandmother to help a child with his reading or spelling. At lunchtime the grandmother eats with her child and spends the remainder of the lunch period with him. If the originally scheduled child is unable to be with the grandmother, another child is sent.

When school is not in session, these same grandmothers devote their time to the McNeilly Day Home. Here they begin work at 7:30 a.m. and visit four children each day. The children are

divided into groups by age, and daily group activities are planned.

CHILDREN WHO ARE TEMPORARILY AWAY FROM HOME

At Metropolitan Children's Home, the children who have foster grandmothers are mainly preschoolers. Each of five grandmothers spends 2 hours a day with two children. Each child has the same grandmother for the duration of his stay. A supervisor coordinates the activities at the Children's Home and selects those children who need the most care and attention. Since many of the parents are in jail, the grandmother helps make their adjustment an easier one.

Hubbard Hospital has nine foster grandmothers working in the Pediatrics Ward. Working with the doctors and nurses, they learn how to handle sick children. If a child has to be moved to another hospital, the grandmother will often accompany him at the doctor's request. If the child is well enough, she will take him to a playroom in the ward; if not, she stays at his bedside to read to him or entertain him. Half the grandmothers work from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and the rest work from 11:30 a.m. to

4:30 p.m. This work also is on a one-to-one basis, the grandmother spending an hour with each of her four foster grandchildren.

THE PROGRAM STAFF

There are four staff members housed in the Knowles Center for Senior Citizens--two of them full time and two part time. The project director plans and conducts inservice and staff meetings, visits each of the institutions, and prepares reports and other paperwork. The secretary prepares the Foster Grandparent payroll and keeps the program's books in addition to performing her secretarial duties. The two field supervisors give daily supervision to the grandmothers and help coordinate the activities of the program with those of the host institutions.

INSERVICE TRAINING

The project director visits each of the host institutions twice a month and meets with the foster grandparents and supervisors to discuss any problems they have. In addition, a day of inservice training is held every 2 months at the Knowles Center for Senior Citizens in Nashville. Inservice training is planned and conducted by the project director, but grandparents often

suggest topics for the programs. In the past, programs have included lectures by community experts on topics such as the needs of young children, problems of drug abuse, and working with retarded children and arts and crafts demonstrations.

PROGRAM BENEFITS THE GRANDPARENTS

Grandparents in the program receive annual physical examinations free of charge. At inservice training sessions, they have the opportunity to hear lectures on low-cost meals, health care, Social Security and Medicare, insurance, and other subjects relevant to them.

The foster grandparents, most of whom are supported by Social Security payments, welcome the opportunity to augment their incomes with the small salaries they receive from the program. They also receive a paid vacation each year and 4 hours of sick leave a month. Most important of all, the grandparents enjoy having a purposeful activity and contributing to the community.

COST OF THE PROGRAM

The program costs about $103,000 a year. Ninety percent of this amount is provided by the Federal Government, and 10 percent

by the Senior Citizens Center and the host institutions. The budget includes salaries for four staff members and the grandparents, office supplies, and some toys. Grandparents receive $1.60 an hour in salary, and 50 cents a day for bus fares if they must travel a long distance. Those who work at Clover Bottom also receive 50 cents a week per child to buy toys and candy. The local funding includes the annual physical examinations, hot meals at three of the five institutions, hospital gowns at Hubbard, and rooms for the program.

For additional information or to arrange for a visit, contact:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Miss Jean Akins, Director
Grandparents for Children
Senior Citizens, Incorporated
Nashville, Tennessee 37202

There are 68 projects in the United States which employ over 4,000 grandparents. Most of these projects are about the same size; however, the host institutions vary from city to city.

For information on the national program, contact:

John Keller, Director
Foster Grandparent Program
Social and Rehabilitation Service
U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
330 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

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MODEL PROGRAMS--Childhood Education

This is one in a series of 34 descriptive booklets on childhood education programs prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

The Day Nursery Assn. of Cleveland, Ohio
Neighborhood House Child Care Services, Seattle, Wash.
Behavior Analysis Model of a Follow Through Program, Oraibi, Ariz.
Cross-Cultural Family Center, San Francisco, Calif.
NRO Migrant Child Development Center, Pasco, Wash.
Bilingual Early Childhood Program, San Antonio, Tex.
Santa Monica Children's Centers, Calif.
Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, Salt Lake City, Utah
Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy, North Hollywood, Calif.
Demonstration Nursery Center for Infants and Toddlers, Greensboro, N.C.
Responsive Environment Model of a Follow Through Program, Goldsboro, N.C.
Center for Early Development and Education, Little Rock, Ark.
DOVACK, Monticello, Fla.
Perceptual Development Center Program, Natchez, Miss.
Appalachia Preschool Education Program, Charleston, W. Va.
Foster Grandparent Program, Nashville, Tenn.
Hartford Early Childhood Program, Conn.
Philadelphia Teacher Center, Pa.
Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, Ypsilanti, Mich.
Mothers' Training Program, Urbana, Ill.
The Micro-Social Preschool Learning System, Vineland, N.J.
Project PLAN, Parkersburg, W. Va.
Interdependent Learner Model of a Follow Through Program, New York, N.Y.
San Jose Police Youth Protection Unit, Calif.
Model Observation Kindergarten, Amherst, Mass.
Boston Public Schools Learning Laboratories, Mass.
Martin Luther King Family Center, Chicago, Ill.
Behavior Principles Structural Model of a Follow Through Program, Dayton, Ohio
University of Hawaii Preschool Language Curriculum, Honolulu, Hawaii
Springfield Avenue Community School, Newark, N.J.
Corrective Reading Program, Wichita, Kans.
New Schools Exchange, Santa Barbara, Calif.
Tacoma Public Schools Early Childhood Program, Wash.
Community Cooperative Nursery School, Menlo Park, Calif.

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